



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
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**Testimony of the Office of Protection and Advocacy
for Persons with Disabilities
Before the Human Services Committee**

Submitted By: Craig B. Henrici
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Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and members of the Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 6765 AN ACT CONCERNING INTERPRETER QUALIFICATIONS. This bill seeks to update and strengthen training and educational requirements for interpreters involved in communications with deaf and hard of hearing persons.

The Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities supports this legislation as an acknowledgement that Connecticut's Deaf and Hard of Hearing community requires, and indeed has a right to, effective communication. The report issued by Commissioner Porter pursuant to Special Act 14-15 An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications addresses the many issues surrounding interpreter qualifications and the need for high standards, especially in legal, school and medical settings.

Properly trained interpreters are needed to facilitate effective communication and language development at school. In 2012, the General Assembly passed Public Act 12-73 An Act Concerning Individualized Education Programs and Other Issues Relating to Special Education. This Act required that any IEP for a child identified as deaf or have hearing loss to include a language and communication plan developed by the child's planning and placement team (PPT). This Act did not expand the rights of children who are deaf or have hearing loss, but it was passed as an acknowledgement that IEPs were not properly addressing communication needs.

I have attached to the electronic copy of this testimony two documents issued jointly by the US Department of Justice and the US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. The documents in part state: "Three federal laws—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973—address the obligations of all public schools to meet the communication needs of students with disabilities... ."

Last year the General Assembly passed Special Act 14-15 An Act Concerning Interpreter Qualifications. This act required the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services, in consultation with the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities and the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf task force on interpreting, to develop a plan with the Commissioner of Education to ensure that an adequate number of qualified interpreters are available to assist students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Ideally, the higher standards for interpreting in all settings will be phased in so there is no shortage of qualified interpreters. Ultimately, this will require the creation of an Interpreting Standards and Monitoring Board. The Office acknowledges the difficult fiscal climate but urges the committee to find a way to strengthen the ability of the Department of Rehabilitative Services to monitor the provision of interpreter services in Connecticut.